

Considering recent posts on Instagram, I wish to make a formal announcement regarding candidates' involvement/participation in open discussions, interviews, and forums they may be invited to. As CRO, I ensure that the Elections Procedure Code and the Charter for Referenda are enforced, and authorize all election notices, publicity and campaign materials regulated by the Code. While candidates are permitted to engage with various members to answer questions that may exist on their campaign after my approval is provided, no candidate is required to participate against their will. Consent is mandatory.

It is my responsibility to ensure all candidates are provided with a respectful, equitable environment to campaign, while also holding candidates to the standards established by the EPC to keep both voters and candidates safe. As such, I have no guarantee that a third-party debate will host the same security or safety parameters for all members alike. For this reason, both Change UTM and Inspire UTM were advised that I could not approve their participation in an external debate while also vowing to maintain an impartial election process.

Consequently, the proposed 'debate' was reformatted into a 'discussion' where *willing* candidates of either slate could discuss their campaign points as customary during an election. It has been brought to my attention that various members have continued to pressure candidates to join the discussion hosted by a third-party group. I will remind members of the purpose and spirit of elections and firmly request that attempts to force candidate participation against their will cease immediately. Furthermore, if concerns or questions regarding the elections or candidates arise, voters and candidates are both expected to voice their concerns to the CRO who has the capacity to address the challenges presented. I will not tolerate the harassment of any candidates, nor do I approve their participation in a discussion that resulted from peer-pressure and harassment.

UTM members seeking to promote a designated candidate or slate should proceed to do so by focusing on that slate/candidate's strengths, campaign points and their proposed initiatives. I caution all members who demean or badger other candidates in hopes of promoting their candidate of choice to remember that your actions will solely harm the candidate(s)/slate of your choosing; The issuing of violations, in the form of demerit points and penalties that could result in disqualification, will be applied to the candidacy that members seek to promote while slandering other candidates. All candidates are aware of their responsibility to guide their 'non-arm's-length-party', and are required to ensure their supporters are fully aware of the consequences of overlooking the policies outlined in the Election Procedure Code.

I trust that these matters will be considered deeply and that we can continue to engage with voters and members in a respectful, dignified manner. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email (cro@utmsu.ca) should you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Athisaya Satgururajah
Chief Returning Officer
UTMSU Spring 2022 Election